

**Remarks AS DELIVERED  
Federal Railroad Administrator Sarah Feinberg  
AASHTO Legislative Panel  
Washington, D.C., 2016  
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Good Morning, it's good to be here. It's always a pleasure to share the stage with my colleagues from DOT, the NTSB and the Army Corps.

So, first of all, I want to start by congratulating of you because it's the work that all of you did that helped us actually get to a long-term surface transportation bill in the first place. So thank you.

If not for your work, I really believe we would not have a bill and such a clear path forward.

It's not a perfect bill. We just alluded to it not being the amount of funding we all would have liked, but no one can argue that this long-term bill isn't a significant step forward.

One of the very big things in the bill is the inclusion of the rail title, of course. That's not happened before. Usually rail is treated separately when it comes to surface transportation so this is huge for us at FRA. And it's really important for us to put rail on the same footing as other modes of transportation.

Congress rightfully recognized that rail plays a significant role, and will continue to play a significant role, in our transportation system.

Secretary Foxx, and all of us at DOT, spent a lot of time over the last year or two talking about our Beyond Traffic report, which is a study about what the future will be like for transportation and for the country.

And the main finding of that report, which will come as no surprise to all of you, is that our population is going to grow significantly over the next 30 years.

As our population grows, as our communities grow, our economies grow.

And we realize more and more that we can't have a strong economy without a strong transportation and infrastructure system.

And we cannot have a strong transportation system without a strong rail system. So we're very grateful that rail is in the bill, and we are already hard at work on implementation.

In case you thought we did not have enough to do, we are now also implementing a huge bill, which is actually really exciting for us.

Included in the bill are 80 different tasks for FRA. We have 13 rules to issue, 35 reports and studies to write and 32 other efforts to lead or to team up with our colleagues at DOT.

So I won't go through all of them, but I want to highlight some of the really significant ones.

One, we are working with Amtrak to provide greater transparency on Amtrak's budgeting and accounting.

We are working on disbursing dedicated funding for commuter railroads to implement Positive Train Control, and we are assisting communities on getting more information about their railroad bridges.

And we have our RRIF program, Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing Program, to allow loans for projects with transit oriented development, something I know a few folks in this room worked on.

So one of the most important safety features of the bill, which is something we especially have been focused on at FRA, which is upgrading safety at grade crossings.

One of the pieces of the bill is a requirement for us to develop and distribute a **model** state action plan on grade crossings. The FAST Act requires every state to submit and update their action plans for crossings too.

During my first year at FRA, few issues have been as important, and risen to the top as quickly, as has improving safety at grade crossings. It's a top priority because we are simply losing too many people at grade crossings.

These are preventable deaths and injuries. They are avoidable incidents, and we can do better, and we have to do better.

But we cannot solve this problem on our own. So I'm grateful that it was included in the FAST Act, and I'm grateful that many of you have partnered with FRA.

We have taken an all-of-the above approach to improve safety at grade crossings. We're working with our partners in law enforcement, we're working with our partners in the tech community, we're working with our partners at state DOTs, we're working with all of you.

Last week, I sent a letter to state DOTs asking them to continue to be vigilant at crossings, to remain focused on safety and to consider partnering with railroads to verify that traffic lights connected to railroad crossings are working properly and are maintained.

I don't want to be issuing demands and commands without offering assistance. So I also mentioned in the letter that in the coming weeks we will be notifying states of additional funding that Congress provided through its FY16 appropriations bill to help all of us upgrade the safety at railroad crossings and prevent deaths.

So again, I thank all of you that have partnered with the FRA to improve safety across the board, particularly at grade crossings.

Finally, I want to make one point about funding before I turn it over to my colleagues. The President has made it clear in his

budget proposal for the next year that he thinks we can—and should—continue to invest in rail, especially passenger rail.

The Administration has requested \$6 billion to invest and continue building a stronger passenger rail network in communities along the West Coast, to the East Coast, the Gulf Coast and everywhere in between.

Every morning when I read the news clips, I see more and more people in Ohio, in Minnesota, in Texas and in Vermont, to name just a few, demanding more frequent, more efficient, better and new service.

Just last week, I was on the first passenger train to travel from New Orleans to Jacksonville, Florida, since Hurricane Katrina.

And I have never seen such support and excitement for passenger rail service in these small communities and large cities.

At every stop, and this may be hard to imagine especially for those of you that live along the Northeast Corridor, but imagine this: At every stop, hundreds of people cheered and greeted the train. High school marching bands played and grade school children waved American flags, simply because an Amtrak passenger train was coming to town for the first time in more than a decade.

I stood next to governors, mayors and leaders, who were Republicans and Democrats, all championing service to be restored because they understand that you cannot connect so

many of these communities without passenger rail service. And you cannot have a strong economy, particularly going into the future, without strong rail system.

So particularly with the FAST Act, we have the foundation to begin strengthening and rebuilding our transportation network. But we still have a long way to go, lots of work to do to build a 21st century transportation system that will serve all of our communities and allow our country to grow and prosper.

I look forward to working with all of you on that task, and I look forward to taking your questions.

Thank You.